Long Live the Kanak

Insurrection!

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"For an insurrection to survive, it needs to deepen and to overcome its internal contradictions, but it also needs fuel, lots of fuel to burn. It's up to each one of us here in the heart of colonial France, which is in the process of crushing the Kanak insurgents who have not yet given up hope (or weapons), to give them as much fuel for their fires as we can —out of solidarity, or simply out of our hatred of the State..."

Que vive l'insurrection kanak!

"Now more than ever we need to show our solidarity in action with the young Kanak insurgents who are refusing to surrender, either to the pressure of political organizations calling for calm or to the French state's threat of vanquishing the revolt with the army. The insurgent youth are still fighting, continuing to demolish the colonial economy and institutional infrastructure in which they don't recognize themselves brick by brick, whatever the proponents of an oppressive relationship to the world, whether capitalist, colonial, or ecocidal may say."

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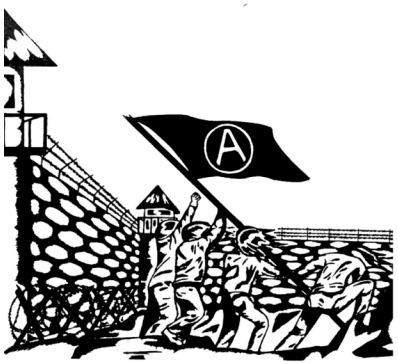
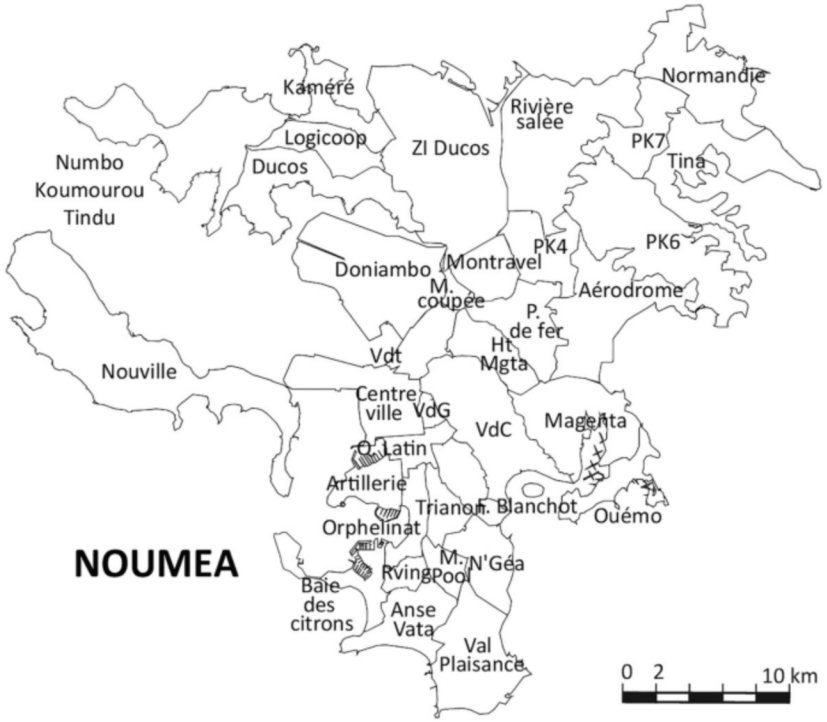
with whatever weapons at hand





Translator's Introduction

The first reflections of our revolutionary pétroleuse, Louise Michel, upon her arrival to Kanaky, which France colonized as a settler plantation and penal colony to which thousands of political prisoners were deported including hundreds of communards after the fall of the Paris Commune, were of the arid summits of the archipelago's volcanoes rising from the blue expanse of the sea. From their jagged heights, "those gorges torn from a cataclysm and still gaping wide," flames spurted long ago, and, as Michel muses, they "may erupt again." This wasn't merely the presentiment of a reverie, but a commitment, for when the 1878 Kanak insurrection erupted, Michel was there to join with them in active solidarity, bestowing the red flag of the Commune to the indigenous rebellion.

> The Kanakas were seeking the same liberty we had sought in the Commune. Let me only that my red scarf, the red scarf of the Commune that I had hidden from every search, was divided in two pieces one night. Two Kanakas, before going to join the insurgents against the whites, had come to say goodbye to me. They slipped into the ocean. The sea was bad, and they may never have arrived across the bay, or perhaps they were killed in the fighting. I never saw either of them again, and I don't know which of the two deaths took them, but they were brave with the bravery that black and white both have.

A century later, *indépendantiste* Nidoïsh Naisseline, returning from France after the May 68 rebellions with the urban spirit of insurrection and the global impulse of third world national liberation struggles, would contribute to organizing two leftist groups with ambitions of national liberation, the *Foulards rouges* [the Red Scarves] and the *Groupe 1878*, in reference to the endurance of Michel's revolutionary gift, that image of the past that unexpectedly re-appears in a moment of danger. Both organizations would fuse into the, at least originally Marxist, *Parti de libération kanak* or Palika, which would then join forces with other *indépendantiste* organizations to form the *Front de libération nationale kanak et socialiste* (FLNKS).

The revolutionary horizon of liberation exceeds the temporality of capitalist, colonialist, and imperialist domination, which forges the inertia of history not only as the extensive subsumption of space and the intensive exploitation of subjectivity but also the "pretensive" domination over time—retroactively appropriating the past into a present that totalizes itself in all directions thus postponing any future other than itself. Yet, the fragile and fragmented history of defeated revolts and unfinished rebellions still persists, not in the concrete linearity of necessity, but in the contingency of excess—though the totality determines all that exists, it is not everything—flickering in and out of pain, under skin and stone, a promised eruption.

France's settler-colonial ambitions advanced in "New Caledonia" with land theft, indigenous reservations, cultural erasure and subsumption to European identities and disease, ecocide and land enclosure foreboding cash crop plantations, discovery of rare earth minerals and extractivism, etc. This all implies the international foundation of a still-forming universal capitalist market economy seeking autochthonous non-market worlds to expand capital's drive for cheaper land and labor. Yet, if settler-colonial ambitions require international capitalism, they also imply a nascent internationalism of both resistance and repression, to which Kanaky's history as a penal colony is a powerful witness even now.

From the 1870's Mokrani Revolt in Algeria to the 25-year-long Yên Thế Insurrection in Vietnam, anti-colonial rebellions are not isolated incidents but a subterranean thread enduring beneath and despite their conquest and defeats. Repression of revolutionary movements, then as today, likewise take an international character, with the export of counter-insurrectionary techniques and technologies, as well as the export of prisons, penal colonies, deportations, and exile. Places like the Île du Diable in Guyana, the Camp-Est prison in Kanaky, and the Barberousse Prison in Algiers were all sites of international terror, where revolutionaries from all around the world would endure torture, incite rebellions, escape, or end their days.

When the great indigenous leader of the 1878 revolt, Ataï, spilled a bag of soil on the ground before the French authorities, proclaiming, "This is what we had," then a bag of rocks, "This is what you've left us," he could have been prophesying the next 150 years of rebellion—from the 1917 revolt, to the 1984 rebellions, and the 1988 aborted start of armed struggle, to the insurrection of 2024. In a newly emerging era of inter-imperialist conflicts and the resumption of the unbroken legacy of anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggle, both resistance and repression are once again taking an international character—from the banlieues to the colonies, from LA to Gaza.

Solidarity does not mean passive spectatorship or yielding support but, like Louise Michel, active involvement in insurrection. Once more, we must continue to pass the red scarf of the revolution hand in hand across the centuries, across the world.

2025

The Current Figures in Kanaky: 400 & 1

05/21/2024

On Tuesday May 21, one of the armed branches of colonial justice, more precisely, the *Procureur de la République* [State Prosecutor], Yves Dupas, drafted a provisional assessment of the destruction in New Caledonia waged by Kanak (mainly youth) insurgents since May 13. Despite the curfew, despite the declaration of a state of emergency (from May 15 to May 27), despite the deployment of the army (notably to defend the port and airports in La Tontouta and in Magenta but also to assist the cops in matters of "logistics"), despite dispatching reinforcements from the CRS 8, RAID, and GIGN, "significant damage, especially from fires, have been observed in the city of Nouméa and bordering municipalities involving both public buildings and equipment and other economic infrastructure."[1] The "public" destruction involved city halls, schools, social service offices, gyms, security cameras, and even social housing for laborers in the mines. As for the second category, described as "economic infrastructure," the prosecutor explained that, "approximately 400 establishments such as retail shops, supermarkets, and business offices" were destroyed or damaged.

To get an idea of the extent of the damage, David Guyenne, the president of New Caledonia's CCI (*Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie*) [Chamber of Commerce and Industry] announced in an assessment on May 21 that, instead of the 200 million euros of damage originally reckoned for the businesses that were "looted and burned," "we're now looking at more than a billion euros" of damage, an update he provided on the public radio station through clenched teeth.

1 CRS 8 (*Compagnies républicaines de sécurité*) is a division of the French national police devoted to repressing urban revolts. RAID (*Recherche, assistance, intervention, dissuasion*) is a special force of the French national police. GIGN (*Groupe d'intervention de la Gendarmerie nationale*) is an elite unit of the French National Gendarmerie, a military and political police unit under orders of the French armed forces.

In Kanaky, Nothing is Over....

05/25/2024

As of Friday, May 24, in a New Caledonia placed under a state of emergency for more than a week by the colonial French state, though the authorities are tirelessly emphasizing their progressive dismantling of Kanak insurgent-held road blocks and the need to restore order with the help of the army and special forces (GIGN, RAID), the situation has not returned to normal. Far from it. To give an example, all commercial flights have been canceled since May 14 and will remain so until at least June 2, in order to give priority access of the international airport in La Tontouta to the military, cops, and administrative management of the island's supply chain, while all schools have been closed by the May 19 executive order which aren't scheduled to be re-opened before June 17. In the same manner, all family visits for the 133 patients in the Nouville hospital have remained prohibited for 10 days now. After an initial assessment of the ongoing destruction (published above) a few days ago, here's a new, though necessarily incomplete, update on the situation. According to the "*Haut-Commissaire*"—the equivalent of "*Préfet*," whose official title was "*Gouverneur*" until 1981[2]—115 police officers and gendarmes have been injured since May 12 (including three BAC who were seriously injured after an operation against rioters looting a police armory and who had to be evacuated to a hospital in Paris),[3] and two gendarmes have been killed: one in Plum on May 15 while driving a police car to an operation, and the second on May 16, by machine-gun fire from another officer as they were equipping an armored vehicle for a mission. Officially, 281 people have been jailed and 18 imprisoned.

Finally, one Caldoche has been killed since the start of the uprising[4] (while attacking a Kanak roadblock on May 18 in Kaala-Gomen in the north of the island), while four Kanak have been killed: Jybril Salo, a 19 year old student who was shot in the back on May 15 by loyalist settlers[5] at a roadblock in the Tindu neighborhood in Nouméa. Two other Kanak, Chrétien Neregote (36 years old) and a young woman, Nassaïe Doouka (17 years old), were each shot in the head on May 20 in the Ducos area by a business owner while they were trying to steal a vehicle from his warehouse. To these must be added the 48 year old Kanak, murdered on May 24 in the Koutio area (Dumbéa), shot by an off-duty cop who was attempting to break through a roadblock. "We will re-establish Republican order in New Caledonia whatever the cost," declared *Haut-Commissaire*, Louis Le Franc, a few days ago in the presence of the commander of the gendarmes and the chief of the colonial police force...

New Attacks, May 22-23
(During Macron's Emergency Visit to Kanaky)

"A large plastic factory was set on fire in the industrial/commercial zone in Ducos in the north of Nouméa on Wednesday, May 22," according to the local press. Later in the day, "a BTP [*Batiment Travaux Public*] data center was demolished," according to David Guyenne, the president of New Caledonia's *Chambre de Commerce et d'Industrie* (CCI). Additionally, according to the Nouméa authorities, on the nights of May 21 and 22, "two schools and 300 dealership vehicles were set aflame during the night."

(Update: On May 25, the local press announced as well that 35 settlers (who often originate from mainland France) in the Kaméré residential neighborhood were evacuated by sea, after their homes were looted and burned and also that the CFA (*Centre de formation des apprentis*) [Center for Vocational Apprenticeship] near Nouville was completely looted then set on fire.)

Prison Uprisings

In the Camp-Est prison in Nouméa, just as overpopulated as French prisons and full of Kanak prisoners, at least two uprisings have occurred: one began on Monday, May 13 with three jail guards taken hostage around 2 PM who were freed

2 The highest authority in Kanaky, even above the New Caledonian government, as the representative of the French Executive, in control of questions of sovereignty, diplomacy, and the army.

3 *Brigade anticommando* is an "anti-terrorist" task force of the French *Brigade de recherche et d'intervention* (BRI) within the French national police forces.

4 The colloquial term for European settlers of Kanaky.

5 The class and racial composition of European settlers is quite complicated. "*Métros*" are people from Metropolitan France (as opposed to the oversea colonies) who usually work white-collar jobs (teachers, nurses, doctors, for which there is no training in Kanaky), higher public administrative jobs (electricity, water, prisons, etc.), or scientists/researchers (whether engineers, mining geologists, etc.). They only settle in Kanaky for short-term contracts (usually 5 years, sometimes 10) while making 3 times the wages they'd make in France, even while the minimum wage is already lower in Kanaky (900) than in France (1400). For example, teachers in Kanaky make 6000 euros, while they'd earn 1800 in France. "*Caldoches*" are multi-generational settlers of European descent (common law prisoners, agricultural settlers, etc.), and mostly comprise the local working class & poor unemployed white people. "*Métros*" are likely to be "liberal," while "*Caldoches*" are more likely to be openly racist. "*Caldoches*" are usually more respected (even if in a combative manner), for they live where the Kanak live and lead similar lives (working class, farming, hunting, fishing) and have their forebears buried in Kanaky, while "*Métros*" are openly despised.

two hours later by a RAID operation. One of the jail guards, who was "severely beaten and seriously wounded," had to be immediately hospitalized. The second revolt took place in the night of May 15, concluding with a national police operation against 50 rebels. Close to 90 cells were ransacked and burned, leading to 30 prisoners being evacuated by plane to the second prison on the archipelago located in Koné (in the north).

The Nickel Industry

Since the start of the uprising, some attacks have targeted the nickel industry. Around 10 PM on May 15, a group of insurgents broke into the SLN (Société Le Nickel) mining headquarters in Kouaoua, pelting the guards with stones to force them to retreat, then burning the mine's conveyor, known locally as "la serpentine," "an 11 kilometer long belt that transports the nickel ore from the mine to the loading dock at the port." The fire continued to consume the mining infrastructure until the following day, since firefighters were unable to intervene in a secure way. This mining infrastructure had already been sabotaged in the same warm-hearted manner in 2020.

On the same day, in the parking lot of Komatsu, the company that produces the massive mining equipment, two of their mining haul trucks were set on fire between the Montravel area and the Ducos industrial zone.

Lastly, on a broader level not only have all of the SLN operated mines operated been shut down for more than a week because "security conditions have deteriorated to the point where continuing normal activity is impossible," according to an official press release from its parent company Eramet on May 24, but above all it is the nickel processing plant that is at risk. The three furnaces in the smelting plant have to be continuously supplied with ore 24 hours a day: "Without the resumption of ore transportation to all our mining centers in the next few days, the furnaces at Doniambo will be irreparably damaged by a lack of ore of sufficient quantity and quality and will be shut down once and for all," warned SLN's union federation in an internal press release, while the Nouméa mayor also emphasized this point during Macron's emergency visit to the archipelago on May 23.

In addition to re-establishing the route between Nouméa and the international airport in La Tontouta that is currently strewn with roadblocks, the restoration of nickel circulation from the five Eramet-owned mines to the processing factory in the south is certainly one of the French state's top priorities. You only have to glance at Eramet's financial investments around the world—from lithium extraction in Argentina to manganese mining in Gabon (where the former local manager of its subsidiary there became the Gabonese Minister of Oil after the 2023 coup d'État)—to understand how crucial it is for the French state to safeguard its interests whatever the cost...

Damage Assessments

In order to evaluate the provisional extent of damage in the private sector, the CCI and the Caledonian government have formulated several appraisals and on May 23 finally adopted a medial scenario in which the 350 industrial and commercial sites destroyed to date will impact up to 3,000 jobs while the cost of the damage will amount to one billion euros. By way of comparison, the material destruction during the successive riots after the murder of Nahel in Nanterre in June 2024 cost around the same sum.

If we look at the consumer sector, which represents only part of the damage since, in addition to the commercial zone, the two large industrial zones in Ducos and Normandie were also targeted, here are a few figures: in New Caledonia, the Carrefour company (via franchised subsidiaries) has 11 stores, six of which were looted and four which were burned (including the outlet store in the large shopping center in Kenu-In). Intermarché (also present on the island via its subsidiary Korail since 2016), saw seven out of its nine stores badly affected by the riots.

Côté Coopérative U (formerly Système U), a local subsidiary that manages five stores on the archipelago, saw one of its stores completely burned down and two others looted. It should be noted that each one of these retail companies are owned via franchise by a few prominent local families (who also own the car dealerships and sports and hardware chains) on an island with 270,000 inhabitants where a trading post economy predominates. Regarding damage in the public sector, in addition to the numerous surveillance cameras that were destroyed and sports and cultural facilities damaged, 35 educational spaces were looted or partially or completely destroyed.

Nearly 25 schools were affected, including three (Les Pervenches in Portes-de-Fer, and Les Orchidée and Gustave-Lords on the Ducos peninsula) that were "significantly damaged, if not entirely destroyed," as Isabelle Champmoreau announced, the government official in charge of education. A dozen secondary schools were also damaged, including the Petro-Attiti high school, where its 780 students will have to be redirected into other infrastructures, which is no small affair. As for middle schools, four are no longer able to accommodate the public, in Auteuil, Kaméré à Boulari, and Rivière-Salée.

Kanak Prisoners Confront the Colonial State

06/01/2024

The Camp-Est prison in Nouméa was built on the ruins of the colonial penal colony, which aren't just ruins—the French State insisted on preserving the penal colony chapel as a permanent insult to the Kanak prisoners...

Three months before the Kanak insurrection in May 2024, a jet-lagged French Minister proudly announced his new project, obviously indispensable to the South Pacific archipelago, even assuring that "with an estimated 500 million euro budget, it would be the most significant public investment ever made in New Caledonia." But what could possibly be the objective of this deluge of money whose only precedent is the Nouméa Accords, signed in 1998 between the French state, loyalist settlers, and the *indépendantiste* parties?[6] Oh well, nothing less than the construction of 600-cell prison on the Ducos peninsula to commence construction in 2028 with a planned completion date in 2032. The Minister of Justice issued this announcement on February 22 during his inauguration of the detention center in Koné (with 120 cells), located in the northern Province, one year after it was commissioned at the cost of 56 million euros. "In Kanaky, the State is investing in your carceral future"—this was the unambiguous message that Éric Dupond-Moretti delivered just a few months before the Senate vote on the new electoral law designed to perpetuate the island's colonization, a law that would trigger riots, barricades, looting, and fires lit on the depth of the urban Kanak youth's misery and forced labor.

Yet, there already exists a huge prison in New Caledonia: the Nouville prison, built—*surprise!*— on the ruins of a colonial penal colony, more commonly called by its original name, "Camp-Est," since the era of the penal colony wasn't so long ago.

Between 1864 and 1931, New Caledonia, a settler colony founded on the dispossession of land from the Kanak people, relegated to "indigenous reservations," combined with the massive importation of European colonists and convicts, saw nearly 21,600 "*transportés*" (those sentenced to forced labor), who were forced to carry out double their sentence on prison farms and, once released, obtained land grants under penal concessions wrested from the Kanak population. But also 3,300 men and 460 women were "*relégués*," following the 1885 law which forced convicted repeat offenders from the metropole into life internment on the colony. Also, more than 4,000 "*déportés*" (political prisoners) were deported to the archipelago following the Paris Commune in 1871 and the Mokrani revolts from 1864 to 1882 against the French occupation in Algeria, not to forget the Hanoi insurgents who fought against the French occupation in Vietnam in 1913, or Cheikou Cissé, a former rifleman arrested in Dakar in 1917 for "inciting civil war" (i.e. self-organization against the French occupation in Senegal), who was deported to the penal colony in New Caledonia in 1925 before sadly ending his days in a prison in Guyana in 1945.

In the Camp-Est Prison...

But let's move on to the prison of today in Nouméa, whose barbed wire fences are built on the ruins of the colonial penitentiary and of which today 95% of its prisoners are Kanak. Here, as in French prisons, the French state not only practices institutionalized torture through solitary confinement but also adds its own colonial touch. In 2013 the French state decided to expand Camp-Est by replacing the detention center's (now demolished) outdated sections directly with ... shipping containers. Since then, two out of three cells in the prison are made out of these 9 cubic meter metal boxes for the international transportation of commodities in which Kanak prisoners are locked up 22 hours of the day, with four, sometimes five, mattresses suspended from the ceiling in a suffocating heat where they're forced to keep company with jail guards, cockroaches, and rats. In 2011 the prison's official occupancy rate was 300%, which reduced in 2023 to 200% with the help of the shipping containers, meaning 600 prisoners for less than 400 established cells. This situation is largely known to the authorities who maintain their torture apparatus at any cost, regardless of the successive condemnations by the European Court of Human Rights in 2020, fines levied by the French Court of Appeal in 2022, or even more recently being forced to pay compensation to dozens of prisoners from Camp-Est who won their appeals for "violation of human dignity" before Nouméa's administrative courts. Whatever the settlers and some of their descendants may say, though the Kanak people have managed for three long centuries to ignore the splendors of State centralization and its benefits such as mass incarceration, they continue still to pay the heavy price of their forced enslavement.

6. As readers can see in these report-backs and analyses, when the word "indépendantiste" refers to most institutionalized political parties and organizations, the truth is that most do not actively seek independence yet still hold onto the name and the legacy of the erstwhile national liberation struggles that are actively being continued in the streets of Kanaky. Most parties cooperate with imperialists (developers, investors), collect taxes on imports from France (and so are content for the archipelago to remain dependent) and are happy to use governmental resources (the courts, police, etc...) to these ends (like evicting people from tribal lands, or for "squatting" illegally on "public" property). Though the national and bureaucrat bourgeoisie stands in opposition to imperialists in their words, they actively perpetuate colonial dependency. Readers should keep this duality in mind, whether "indépendantiste" refers to protestors / insurgents or political parties / organizations.

When flames erupted in the streets of Kanaky on Monday May 13, prisoners immediately joined in on the inside, taking three prison guards hostage around 2 PM, who were freed two hours later by a RAID operation. One of the guards, "severely beaten and seriously wounded," had to be immediately hospitalized. A second collective revolt occurred on the night of May 14, simultaneously targeting several wings of the prison, resulting in 60 out of the 230 cells ransacked and burned. Given the overpopulation in Camp-Est, a good part of the prison was destroyed.

Notably, prisoners were able to take advantage of the under-staffing of the prison guards, since during that time of proliferating road blocks and incendiary looting, a lot of them were too occupied defending their homes or were far away from the prison, locking themselves away in the little hostels made available by the prison administration for those who couldn't return to their homes. The guard's self-confinement was sometimes voluntary, since, according to one of them, "on social networks, there were calls for rioters to free 'their brothers' from prison, while circulating the Facebook profiles of prison guards." During the first two weeks of the insurrection, only about 30 (of the 70 total) guards clocked in daily at the prison, though they would be quickly joined by a dozen ERIS officers and police reinforcements to protect the outside of the prison.[7]

We can add two elements to this incandescent situation: one concerning the internal surveillance of prisoners and another concerning those surveilled on the outside (on parole or with electronic ankle-monitors). Here's what one guard had to say in confidence to a journalist the day after the uprising: "The computer server we depend on and which relays information to mainland France was burned, and thus it became no longer possible for us to act procedurally via computers... We had also lost control over the electronic ankle-monitors here. There are a lot of them on the island, between 180 and 200. And their alarms didn't stop ringing to alert us of incidents involving people who weren't at their homes. We had no idea where they were. It's like prisoners on parole. Some of them don't come back. They were all on the run."

Finally, considering the significant loss of 168 prison cells, combined with the fact the State was even more eager to fill Camp-Est with rioters arrested day after day (often for looting or during confrontations with the cops), the prison administration was forced to make decisions haphazardly. Since the route between Nouméa and the archipelago's second prison in Koné on the north of the island was blocked off, 30 prisoners were evacuated there by plane. Trying to save space, women prisoners were transferred to the guard's quarters, while their 15-cell prison wing was occupied by men. Seeking to make even more space by taking advantage of the numerous air lifts between France and New Caledonia, it was also decided to transfer prisoners with long-term sentences to Polynesia and France. This would effectively cut them off almost permanently from their families, 28,000 kilometers and 30 hours by plane away, continuing New Caledonia's sordid history of deporting prisoners to the other side of the world, in one direction or the other.

As if all this wasn't enough, the prison administration was forced to admit through clenched teeth that the Kanak uprising inside the prison walls had indeed led to prisoners being released: "It was decided to quickly release prisoners. All those whose sentences were completed have thus been released to make room for rioters who have committed acts of violence. This is no different from Covid, which was also an exceptional situation." On the other hand, along with the 3,500 cops and military troops who were deployed to Kanaky from France, three judges and 66 judicial police also arrived on the May 23 trip to investigate or observe the special court hearings held daily in Nouméa—compared with the usual twice a week. By the evening of Wednesday, May 29, 49 prison sentences linked to the riots had already been pronounced (immediate trials with immediate sentencing), though the steamroller of the courts had only just began to roll: 91 other arrest warrants had already been issued for the tribunal by this date, according to the prosecutor's office.

Between those scum in judge's robes and the OPJ who came to the tropics to apply the May 16 ministerial order demanding "a firm, rapid, and systematic carceral response" against the insurgents, while Kanak prisoners are still being locked up in the rusting shipping containers at Camp-Est...[8] Now more than ever is the time to display our incendiary solidarity with this revolt against one of the last French colonies.

7. *Équipes régionales d'intervention et de sécurité* (ERIS) are the special forces of the French prison administration trained to crush prison uprisings.

8. *Officier de police judiciaire* (OPJ) are the police that work directly under court judges and prosecutors.

The Kanak Insurrection and the Nickel Industry

06/08/2024

Despite the determination [*volontarisme*] of the French colonial authorities who continue to proclaim "a return to normal" in successive flurries of press releases, the situation in New Caledonia is far from being settled four weeks after the insurrection broke out at the hands of Kanak youth. And there are clear signs that it still continues, such as the continued curfew (6 AM to 6 PM) that will remain in effect until at least June 17, the requisition of gas stations for the exclusive use of the cops and military which was only lifted on June 8, or additionally the fact that the international airport in La Tontouta still remains closed "until further orders." Only the Magenta airfield has been open for commercial flights since June 5 but only to regional flights from New Caledonia to Lifou, Ouvéa, and Maré, while nearly 500 tourists have been stranded on the island for three weeks now. As for the north of New Caledonia, the army is directly in charge of logistics and supply (and thus rationing priorities) for stores, managing the shipments that arrive by boat to Koné.

Presently, despite the pressure of the deployment of 3,500 cops and military troops, Kanak insurgents continue to erect road blocks even after they've been dismantled in the Nouméa neighborhoods or along the 50 kilometer route to the airport, not to forget how they sometimes booby trap them with gas canisters or even how they've prepared a few home-made surprises for our boys in blue: on June 4 in Dumbéa for example, a gendarme fell to the bottom of a hole, after he stepped on the tree branches concealing the opening. "At a 1 meter depth, 2 millimeter diameter iron rods had been positioned vertically at the bottom creating stakes. The gendarme was impaled through one leg and a metal stake penetrated between his bullet-proof vest and body armor but didn't pierce through his flesh thanks to the kevlar plate."

In total, on this archipelago with 270,000 inhabitants, 212 police and gendarmes have been wounded since May 13, but also a significant number of Kanak people have been injured, yet the authorities are refusing to release official numbers. We all know the numbers are significant and very serious: several insurgents have lost eyes or have sustained broken facial bones as a result of police shooting flash balls, while others have suffered bullet wounds and still remain in comas.

Police Murders

Two recent examples: on May 29 in Dumbéa around 8 PM, during a police attack on a road block, the cops endured numerous volleys of stones and also rifle fire. The GIGN replied, shooting six times "towards" the shooter. One insurgent was severely injured. "Despite surgery, his prognosis is still life-threatening, as medical findings show the presence of two bullets, one in the chest and another in the shoulder." Then, on June 3 around 4 PM at the road block on Saint-Laurent tribal land on the Col de la Pirogue road, the strategic route leading to the international airport, gendarmes opened fire on Kanak insurgents (who, according to the authorities, had first opened fire on their vehicle): one suffered a bullet in the shoulder and another in the head. We learned on Saturday June 8 that the latter, Lionel Païta, had died in the hospital, bringing the number of deaths on the territory to 8 (5 Kanak—including two original from Canala, one from Maré, one from Poindimié, one from Païta; one Caldoche from Kaala- Gomen who had shot at a road block; and two gendarmes, including one killed by a colleague). Needless to say, in such a situation wild rumors are circulating about the "disappeared" numbering well above the 8 official deaths, while the prisons in Nouméa and Koné are all entirely full, and Kanak prisoners continue to be deported to Polynesia and Fresnes—the official count numbering 726 in police custody, 115 sent before the tribunal, and 60 detention warrants issued since May 13.

The Nickel Industry

To put it briefly, New Caledonia accounts for a quarter of the global reserve of nickel, extracted from strip mines to supply three processing plants. The first two produce ferronickel, a lower-grade alloy used in stainless steel, and the third produces battery quality nickel (mainly used by Tesla since 2021).

The first factory (Koniambo Nickel, KNS) is in the hands of Kanak *indépendantistes* in the north and has been shut down since February 2024 after the withdrawal of its key shareholder, the Swiss raw material conglomerate Glencore. Since then, the factory's activity has solely focused on maintaining the integrity of the furnaces (if the furnace of one smelting plant shuts down in the absence of ore or electricity, not only will it be damaged for good if the shutdown is abrupt, but it will take months for it to be able to be turned back on).

The second factory, the historic SLN plant founded in 1880 located in Doniambo (Société Le Nickel is 56% owned by the French group Eramet, which is itself 27% owned by the French state) had already defaulted on its payments before the insurrection, artificially kept alive by a loan from the French state of 60 million euros last February. Moreover, Eramet is also keen to offload its metallurgy activities in New Caledonia, especially since it operates the world's largest nickel mine in Weda Bay on the island of Halmahera (Indonesia) in the middle of old growth forests and

has just been awarded gigantic lithium mining contracts in Chile and Argentina. In Kanaky, since all five of the mining sites that supply the company with ore have been blocked for four weeks and its surplus stock of ore finally having been exhausted, not to mention riots taking place only a few hundred meters from its smelting factory, the company is at the heart of the French state's counter-insurgency operations.

The third factory, the so-called South plant located in Goro, owned by the Prony Resources conglomerate, has also defaulted on its debt, only surviving thanks to the French state loaning it 140 million euros in March. Its key shareholder, the Swiss trader Trafigura, has been eager to sell its shares for months now, and the infamous "contract of the century," signed in 2021 with Tesla, is still a long way off. Just like SLN, Prony Resources' activities in both the mine and the processing plant have been suspended since the start of the insurrection, even if its hydro- smelting process is different from those of the other factories in the archipelago.

At the heart of the Kanak youth's insurrection, in addition to colonialism, racism, humiliation, and hardship, there's also the issue of nickel, since the nickel processing plants that provide all the island's artificial wealth (90% of exports and 25% of jobs) were already almost in bankruptcy or "stand by" even before the uprising. This applies to all three of the main forces on the archipelago, with the factory in the north in the hands of Kanaks and the two factories in the south in the hands of the loyalists and the state (SLN). In the last ten years, Indonesia has effectively gone from 0% to 55% of the global production of nickel (compared with 5% for New Caledonia) with Chinese capital causing prices to fall nearly 43% in 2023 alone thanks to unbeatable labor and electrical costs. Faced with this, the French state has for months tried to straighten out its colony it can't at any cost lose, attempting to negotiate a 200 million euro "Nickel Pact" with the Caledonian government (which is comprised of both loyalist and *indépenantistes* parties, while in the hands of the latter). The "Nickel Pact" would involve subsidies on energy costs, in return for which the factories would commit to as a priority providing European markets with electric vehicle batteries, while the local government would strongly raise taxes, would authorize the export of much more raw nickel ore, and would temporarily return jurisdiction of the mining code to the French state.

In sum, this "Nickel Pact," which has undergone eight iterations since November 2023 and has still yet to be signed into law, is a project that seeks to intensify the extraction of nickel destined for the imperialist center, which would transform Kanaky into a territory devoted solely to mining, definitively ensconced within a neo-colonial framework. This is the inverse of the famous Nouméa Accords of 1998, which were supposed to buy off social peace, and which foresaw the utilization of mining income to promote the development of New Caledonia until its possible independence (thus the three referendums on independence from 2019 to 2021, the transfer of mines and a factory to the Kanak bourgeoisie, and the creation of a local government).

The "Nickel Pact" has thus come to offend Kanak politicians who were counting on this resource to ground their economic independence ("the state wants to steal our nickel"), urban Kanak youth who had already denounced the corrupt politicians and who never saw a scrap of the money poured into the archipelago, as well as the Kanak tribal collectives who are becoming increasingly more aware of the destruction engendered by the intensification of exctractivism (in terms of river pollution, health effects, and landslides) and are beginning to advocate for an independence that would drive out the French state as well as the mines for good.

This explains why the April 2 Senate vote and then the May 15 referendum on "reforming" the New-Caledonian electoral body (which had been blocked since 1998), which would perpetuate the colonization of the archipelago in numerical voting outcomes, was the spark for the insurrection that has methodically destroyed commerce and industry in the island's capital that has destroyed 570 businesses while causing more then 1.5 million euros of direct damage, according to the latest assessment from the Haut-Commissaire, Louis Le Franc, published on June 7.9

Kanak Politicians Lose Control & Call for Calm in Vain

When the situation exploded on Monday, May 13 with the blockade of Nouméa after six months of demonstrations against the electoral reform (including demonstrations of 3,000 people in late November, 5,000 on February 25, 15,000 on March 28, and 60,000 people on April 13), Kanak politicians rapidly lost any control and not only appealed for calm but also condemned the actions of the insurgents.

Faced with groups of mobile, autonomous Kanak youth engaged in looting and destruction, Christian Tien launched an appeal for calm in the name of the CCAT (*Cellule de coordination des actions de terrain*)[10] on May 14 on the pro-independence Radio Djido: "I am calling for all our youth to stand down. Remain where you are, remove

9 The French state announced plans in January 2024 to impose new voting rules that would give tens of thousands of settlers voting rights, while introducing legislations to defer the local elections due in April.
10 See appendix, "Chronological note on Political Parties in Kanaky"

the road blocs, stay organized and structured. The CCAT has never called for looting businesses," all while also urging parents "not to let their kids go out into the streets." This line never varied, to the extent that in a May 15 press release, CCAT explained, "our fight for free Kanaky will be long and strewn with pitfalls, thus CCAT calls for all citizens mobilized in Kanaky to stay calm and respect orders," and likewise on May 31 where it added that "CCAT has never called for violence, looting, or harming anyone... It cautions against acts of vandalism. These actions must not tarnish our struggle for the good of all citizens of Kanaky."

But let's return to May 14, since that was the day that Daniel Goa, president of the main *indépendantiste* party in the FLNKS, the *Union Calédonienne* (UC, which, moreover, was at the origin of CCAT's creation in November 2023), also published a press release in which he called for "our youth to remain calm, to show patience, and to cease all acts of violence and looting that dishonors our people. This is not what dignity and freedom look like.... The looting orchestrated last night has dishonored us and does nothing for our cause or our fight. Worse, it impedes it... This is not the face of Kanaky. We do not steal from our home. We are dignified. To all the business leaders whose lives, property, and projects to bring life to our country have been affected, I offer our full support, our full sympathy, and our great disapproval. The tools of the trade must be protected."

Also on May 14, Louis Mapou, a member of the second main indépendantiste party in the FLNKS, PALIKA (*Parti de Libération Kanak*), and President of the government of New Caledonia since 2021, also called in a press release for "calm and reason," adding that "all the reason for social discontent, frustration, and anger cannot justify endangering or destroying what our country has been building towards for decades. We cannot jeopardize our future." Finally, let's add that even the traditional Kanak authorities joined in the condemnations in vain, like the Tribal Senate [*Sénat coutumier*]11 presided over by Victor Gogny, who issued a solemn press release in which he enjoined that "it is imperative that our youth show restraint and integrity and privilege the proper channels of dialogue and collaboration to express their legitimate demands and aspirations." The National Council of Chiefs [*Conseil National des Chefs*] (*Inaat ne Kanaky*, created in 2022) quickly joined these calls, again on May 14, the day after the first insurrectionary night, appealing "to the youth to show calm, wisdom, and respect for the authorities' orders."

11 The Tribal Senate represents tribal law in the New Caledonian government institutions created by the Nouméa Accords. It's composed of sixteen members appointed by the Hoot Ma Whaap, Paicî-Cèmuhi, Ajié Aro, Xârâcùù, Drubea-Kapumè, Nengoné, Drehu, and Iaaï tribal councils, with two representatives per tribal area of New Caledonia.

Finally on May 15, the FLNKS (*Front de libération nationale kanak et socialiste*) issued its own position on the insurrection underway, which was explicit all least about its own role of colonial co-management with the French state since the Matignon Accords in 1988 and the Nouméa Accords in 1998: "The FLNKS, committed to the economic and social development of Kanaky, deplores the actions perpetrated against businesses and offers its support to the business leaders and workers impacted.... It calls for the road blocks to be lifted to allow free access of the population to products, services, and basic necessities. This call is also addressed to all political and tribal [coutumières] authorities so that everyone wherever they are can contribute to restoring peace and calm to our people."

This request was heeded by members of CCAT who, unable to return to the country by plane, held a meeting on May 15 at the CICP [*Centre international de culture populaire*] in Paris during which Romuald Pidjot, joint secretary of the *Union Calédonienne* (UC) explained that "the role of the CCAT must be to pacify the youth, but we'll need the help of the State," while Rock Haocas (leader of the USTKE [*Union syndicale des travailleurs kanaks et des exploités*]—union and general coordinator of the *Parti travailliste*, the other major component of CCAT) could only implore: "Urban war is not what we want, but the youth have reached a stage where we can no longer control them. We are in a moment of rupture, and it's not for lack of trying to avert it."

Sabotaging the Nickel Industry

Since the start of the insurrection, it can legitimately be asked what the situation is in the nickel mines and factories regarding sabotage (or the lack thereof). Outside of the capital Nouméa, which itself was strewn with road blocks, looting, and fires set by young Kanak insurgents, what was the situation for example in the "bush" and tribal lands where half the Kanak population lives? Even if we suspect that information has poorly filtered through from there, it seems that it was mainly the SLN's mining infrastructure (i.e. the state's) that were attacked but also the Prony Resources infrastructure (i.e. the loyalist's factory in the south):

- in Thio on the East coast, the nickel mine's conveyor belt which loads the ore carriers at the seaside dock was damaged. The Plateau and Camp des Sapins mines were also attacked with both looting and destruction.
- in Kouaoua, also on the East coast, the 11 kilometer long conveyor belt, known as "la serpentine," that transported ore from the mines to the loading dock in the bay was subject to its 12th fire in 10 days on June 1.
- in Népoui, a village located at the center of the West coast, an ore carrier that urgently arrived on June 2 to load 19,000 tons of nickel had to immediately turn

- back to Nouméa to supply the SLN factory in Doniambo which had exhausted its three weeks worth of surplus stock and was endanger of its furnaces being "irreparably damaged," except that—with a bang!—a part of the conveyor was set on fire in the middle of the night affecting a hundred meters of the conveyor belt. As a result, the loaded ore carrier arrived at its destination one day late (on June 4). Knowing that the factory in Doniambo now has to receive one such vessel every three out of four days in order to continue to function properly, the SLN has since dispatched a second ore carrier but this time much further north (to the Tiébaghi mine in Koumac), hoping that the Kanak youth will be less hostile.
- in Houaïlou, a village on the East coast, the *Centre de Formation aux Techniques de la Mine et des Carrières* (CFTMC), located at the Poro mine, was completely demolished: "All the training tools, mining machines, classrooms, and driving simulators were wrecked, vandalized, and burned." The facility was used to train youth seeking work in the mining sector.
- in Nouméa, around 4 in the morning on May 9, the security guard positioned on the dock was taken out of commission by unknown insurgents before the mooring lines of the Prony Express ferry dedicated to transporting workers to the Prony Resources factory were severed. Their speedboat was also set adrift into sea. Then in Goro, located at the south of the island, around a 1 hour 30 minute drive from the capital, the Prony Resources factory was directly attacked on May 23 and lost two mining vehicles. It has since been guarded day and night by 35 security guards from the private security corporation Erys, but the industrial and mining complex is still far from being able to resume operations and even launched on June 7 its "*Plan particulier d'intervention*" (PPI), a program designed to reinforce its security in the face of exterior threats. In this instance, "the current disruptions have forced us to shut down our operations. We are facing an interruption of our water supply from Lake Yaté, and since June 4 we have no longer had electrical power," the industrial giant detailed a few days ago, without daring to speak of sabotage....

For an insurrection to survive, it needs to deepen and to overcome its internal contradictions, but it also needs fuel, lots of fuel to burn. It's up to each one of us here in the heart of colonial France, which is in the process of crushing the Kanak insurgents who have not yet given up hope (or arms), to give them as much fuel for their fires as we can—out of solidarity, or simply out of our hatred of the State...

Road Blocks, Sabotage, and the Whole Political Mess

06/14/2024

Last weekend new road blocks were erected in Nouméa on the occasion of the European elections by Kanak insurgents from Saturday night to Sunday, June 9 causing major disruption. However, the state has continued to do its utmost to preserve a semblance of normality, even if it means reducing the usual 57 voting stations in Nouméa to 6 locations (and the 296 stations in 33 municipalities in the country to 50 locations) or postponing their opening time to 7 in the morning. This would have worked, except that in the northern areas of Greater Nouméa, in Dumbéa sur Mer, Pic aux Chèvres, Koutio, and Apogoti, clashes with the cops resumed at dawn, the four-lane Savexpress highway was blockaded, and even the Robert-Abel school (in Dumbéa) that was scheduled to welcome voters was burned down on June 5, following the announcement of its electoral assignment.

Elsewhere, the youth center in the Tuband area (in Nouméa) was set on fire on the evening of the electoral circus, while no voting took place in the blockaded town halls in Kouaoua (where the nickel conveyor belt was regularly burned) or in Ouvéa (where the military assassinated 19 Kanaks in 1988,[12] and where two FLNKS leaders were killed the following year by an *indépendantiste* Kanak opposed to their signing of the Matignon Accords with France).[13]

In the end, the more or less voluntary voting abstention rate reached 87% in New Caledonia during these European elections. And no one would be surprised that of the 29,000 settlers (out of a population of more than 270,000) who came out against all odds to vote in the polls under the armed protection of the cops, the Macronist candidate came out on top (28%) for her good and loyal service to the loyalists, followed by the far right candidates (the RN 22%, Reconquête 16%), and the right (12%). But that doesn't matter, since after the dissolution of the National Assembly following this poor excuse of an election, one of the consequences is that

12 On the island of Ouvéa in Kanaky, in retaliation for numerous French colonial attacks and assassinations on the independence movement and two days before the 1988 French presidential election, 60 FLNKS independence fighters attacked a gendarme station on April 22, 1988. Four gendarmes were killed, and the other 26 gendarmes were taken hostage, separated into two groups, one of which was transported to a cave in the north of the island. The French military and special police and gendarme forces were deployed, storming the cave and killing 19 of the freedom fighters on May 5 1988, most of whom were summarily executed.

13 On May 4, 1989, Jean-Marie Tjibaou, then leader of the FLNKS, and his number two, Yeiwéné Yeiwéné, were both assassinated less than a year after the Matignon Accords were signed.

the infamous voting reform act that sparked the Kanak insurrection on May 14 could no longer be adopted in time (the constitutional revision was due to be adopted on July 1, 2024)—a de facto funeral endorsed by President Macron, who finally announced on June 12 that this bill of law would be "suspended" (but not withdrawn, much to the dismay of the *indépendantistes*).

More largely, the French forces estimate that there are currently nearly 2,000 Kanak insurgents still active (out of the 10,000 estimated on May 13) and more than "500 roadblocks" regularly re-erected after having been dismantled, sometimes booby trapped with gas canisters, or protected by metallic stakes to puncture the tires of the police and military vehicles.

Two gendarme supply trucks, a patrol vehicle, as well as an armored Centaur were decommissioned last week by such traps. Let us recall that out of the 90 Centaur armored vehicles equipped with optical surveillance and a firing turret which were to be deployed by France by the end of 2024, 30 of them were destined for France's oversea colonies: 6 had already been frantically sent by cargo plan to New Caledonia in early June, while 10 others (loaded onto a Navy ship) are expected to arrive in the coming weeks in Nouméa.

Mont-Dore

On Thursday June 13 in the Mont-Dore municipality (located 12 kilometers to the east of Nouméa), a large police operation mobilized at dawn between the Saint-Louis tribal land and the area of La Coulée, deploying 200 mobile gendarmes and GIGN units, two helicopters, and several armored vehicles in an attempt to dismantle the road blocks. These road blocks have since the start of the insurrection been blockading the route from the South to the Prony nickel factory. And here again, not only did the cops and military have to confront the insurgents all morning, but also several armored vehicles also had their tires destroyed by home-made traps. It seems that Soframe—the corporation from the Alsacian town of Hangenbieten that designed and manufactured the vehicles for the special forces of the French army and the gendarmerie (including the Centaur)—hadn't planned for everything.

In any case, in Mont-Dore, the third most populated municipality in New Caledonia (28,000 inhabitants), there isn't much left for the gendarmes "to save" after four weeks, since the rioters had already looted and destroyed everything they could, at least in the north of the city: commercial businesses from Pont-des-Français to Saint-Michel (Darty, four stores in the Conception neighborhoods, a dozen more in the Boulari town center, McDonald's, etc.), but also street furniture, public lighting, electrical networks, surveillance cameras—the installation of which had just been doubled (26 out of 30 cameras were destroyed)—municipal buildings (town halls, offices, the Pont-des-Français library, market, cultural center, police stations), as well as the Boulari college, which lost several classrooms and administrative offices.

Oh yes, there was also the electoral office of the Macronist deputy, Nicolas Metzdorf, who had introduced the infamous electoral reform bill which had set the whole island aflame on May 13 and who is once again running for office in the next elections on the Loyalist "union" bill. Oh well, his offices in Mont-Dore were entirely burned down the night of June 13, a few hours after the gendarmes attacked the whole sector.

To hold the streets of Nouméa faced with sometimes armed Kanak insurgents, we'll also note that the gendarmerie installed fixed firing posts at strategic intersections and that the official number of casualties rose again on June 11 to nine after the announcement of the death of Joseph Poulawa (from Ouvéa), shot by the GIGN on May 29 and who had since been in a coma. This gives us the opportunity to put a name to the six Kanaks who have lost their lives since the start of the insurrection:

- Djibril Salo (19 years old), killed by a bullet to the back on May 15 after being shot by loyalist settlers at a road block in the Tindu area.
- Nassaié Doouka (17 years old) and Chrétien Neregote (36 years old), each killed by a bullet to the head on May 20 in the Ducos area, shot by a business owner who suspected they wanted to steal a vehicle from his warehouse.
- Dany Tidjite (48 years old), killed by an off-duty cop who tried to force his way through a road block in the Koutio area.
- Joseph Poulawa (34 years old), killed on May 28 in Dumbéa by two bullets to the chest and shoulder by the GIGN, which claims they only "returned fire" (shooting six times). His death was announced on June 11.
- Lionel Païta (26 years old), killed on June 3 by a bullet to the head who was shot by a gendarme in Col de la Pirogue at the roadblock on Saint-Laurent tribal land along the strategic route to the international airport. His death was announced on June 8.

On June 13, the official assessment of the authorities also shows 1,139 arrests of rioters over the last month, as well as 177 police officers and 64 gendarmes wounded (plus two gendarmes killed).

Destruction, Sabotage, and Blackouts

A new assessment of the destruction was released on June 11, this time coming from an expert, in this case the president of the *Comité des Société d'Assurances* (COSODA)

of New Caledonia, Frédéric Jourdain. He has so far identified 900 businesses and shops, 200 houses, and 600 vehicles burned down since the start of the last four weeks of the insurrection. "This has never been seen before in Caledonia," even after "climate disasters" (the cyclone season runs from November to April), announcing in an interview on the public TV channel La 1ère the arrival, at the same time as police reinforcements from France, of 20 insurance experts to be sent over every 5 days. He also confirmed the figure of 1 billion euros of damage and explained the good old statistical method that has led all insurance companies to refuse new contracts in Kanaky, "The principal of insurance is the random nature of the occurrence of a loss or insurance claim. At present, however, there is a very strong probability that the losses here are not random. The instruction from our offices has thus been not to underwrite any new claims until free circulation of movement is restored."

To top it all off, we learned today, June 14, that the local government of New Caledonia (lead by the FLNKS *indépendantistes* and the Loyalist parties) has officially been in default of debt payments for several days "in view of fiscal tax losses and social security benefits." It will therefore no longer be able to pay benefits or salaries at least until June (let alone the partial unemployment benefits announced following the start of the destruction) and has over the last week been in negotiations with the French state to immediately meet the treasury needs, according to Louis Mapou, the FLNKS president since 2021. So we can understand a little better why the various *indépendantiste* politicians have ceaselessly been calling (without great success) for a stop to the fires, looting, and above all to lift the road blocks, since they are co-managers of the archipelago's governance, they cannot accept the systematic destruction to the economy waged by young Kanak insurgents for the last several weeks, not to mention the sabotage against the mines and two nickel factories (while the third has been shut down). Incidentally, the flagship of these nickel processing plants, the Prony Resources factory, which announced its partial shutdown on June 7 following the sabotage of its critical infrastructure, has just provided a few details regarding this: it has at once been deprived of water following "the destruction of the pump station," but also of electricity following "shots fired at a power station, depriving electricity to a good part of its industrial facilities."

In this respect, the electrical blackout that occurred a few days later (on June 12 around 12:20 PM) throughout the entirety of the main island in the archipelago hasn't reassured any local leaders of all political leanings. Although electricity has been progressively reestablished after several hours, teams from the Caledonian energy supplier (Enercal) were still at work at 5 PM to try to "restore the power supply and identify the cause of the incident," even if no one dared publicly evoke the hypothesis of another act of sabotage (for example, insurgents firing at transformers). And let us note that it is paradoxically because the SLN nickel factory has to run its furnaces at minimum power because they lack the ore to supply them with fuel, and thus which are consuming less electricity, that the supplier has been immediately able to participate in reestablishing electricity to the archipelago, thanks to its *Centrale accostée temporaire* (CAT). Since September 2022, the SLN in fact was able to function thanks to an off- shore floating oil-fired power plant (contracted from the global leader of such equipment, the Turkish conglomerate Karpowership), designed to compensate for the shortcoming of its old power plant that dated back to 1972 … which still hasn't prevented its nickel processing costs from being less competitive with those in Indonesia.

A Political Mess

For a week, the various *indépendantiste* parties and groups have been holding internal assemblies, in view of the 46th FLNKS congress to be held on Sunday June 15 on Netchaot tribal land in the Koné municipality (capital of the northern Province). This is where compromises will (or will not) be worked out regarding the political line to be adopted following the May insurrection, the place of CCAT within the FLNKS, and also the two deputy candidates to be presented for the next legislative elections on June 30 and July 7 (let us recall that in September 2023, the Kanak *indépendantiste*, Robert Xowie, was elected senator of New Caledonia, where he sits in the communist bloc in France's senate).

On the eve of the European elections on June 8, the steering committee of the *Union Calédonienne* (UC), one of the two main *indépendantiste* parties, met on Mia tribal land in the Canala municipality. The UC president, Daniel Goa, toned down his statement on May 14, the day after the start of the insurrection, in which he proclaimed regarding the young Kanak insurgents that, "The looting orchestrated last night has dishonored us and does nothing for our cause or our fight. Worse, it impedes it..." This time, he was forced to observe that the issue wasn't just political but also social, and that at the very least he had to listen to the incendiary message of the rioting Kanak youth of Nouméa and its outskirts: "in addition to the political conflict, a social conflict has arisen, which is difficult to control, because other frustrations are being expressed. According to the sources of the *Haut-Commissaire,* 10,000 youths were in the streets. They came to smash, loot, and burn, to express their hatred of this society that we thought we had created just for them. What future did we actually reserve for them? This isn't our way, it's contrary to our customs and traditions, but the fact remains that what happened happened.... Today, this revolt unfolds amidst social pain, because in addition to the underlying political fight there is a latent social and societal conflict."

Then, raising his tone, he proposed nothing more and nothing less than a declaration of independence for September 24 of the coming year (September 24, 1853 is the date when France took possession of New Caledonia): "France has deceived us so much that we must declare our sovereignty fully, immediately, and non-negotiably. We are thus proposing September 24, 2025 to declare our independence, which will be the beginning of a new mandate with new elections... We will also add a transitional period for the political withdrawal of the French state from Kanaky and a timeline for the transfer over of ruling powers. Sovereignty will then be shared if France accepts it until September 24, 2029 where our sovereignty will be full and complete on the anniversary of 176 years of colonization and the end of the colonial mandate."

Concerning the lifting of road blocks, the president of the UC also found a new argument on Monday, June 10 to try to get them lifted: "We'll need free circulation of movement" especially "to lead the campaign" for new legislative elections!

As for PALIKA (*Parti de Libération Kanak*), the other main *indépendantiste* party, Louis Mapou (also the president of the Caledonian government), reiterated on June 13 his "urgent call for the immediate lifting of the road blocks and a return to calm," while pointing out that "the decision of the president of the Republic to dissolve the National Assembly confirms that the constitutional law concerning the provincial electoral body is no longer in effect." This position is identical to the one PALIKA's political bureau released the same day, demanding those responsible "currently mobilized" to lift their road blocks and barricades, since "the time has come for the reconstruction of social peace and social order." Let us recall that PALIKA is in charge of the northern Province (held by the *indépendantistes*) as well as the nickel factory currently waiting for a buyer and which is also in charge of coordinating the political bureau of the FLNKS.

Perhaps the most important general assembly before the FLNKS congress was that of the CCAT (*Cellule de Coordination des Actions de Terrain*, founded in November 2023 and initiated by the UC, the USTKE union, and the *Parti Travailliste*) which was held on June 13 and 14 on Azareu tribal land in the Bourail municipality. But we'll know more about it in the coming days...

In any case, it will take a lot more palavering on the island for the Kanak politicians to make the insurgent youth accept that the revolt be over now, after all the deaths, the imprisonments in shipping containers in the Camp-Est prison, and above all, after they've succeeded in autonomously wresting a bit of dignity and freedom in their confrontation with the French colonial system....

Two Exceptional Days

06/21/2024

Decidedly, since the start of the Kanak insurrection last May 13, the least we can say is that, though the days (and the nights) continue to pass one after the other, they're not all alike. While some are beginning to feel reassured that tensions in the archipelago have begun to diminish in the last week, this is absolutely not the case. Rather than going into detail about everything that has happened since the last article we published, we've chosen to focus on two exceptional days: June 17, with the incandescent re-opening of the schools, and June 19 and its aftermath, with the arrest of 11 supposed leaders of the *Cellule de coordination des actions de terrain* (CCAT). Let's start with the events two days ago.

June 19, 6 AM. Arrest of 11 Leaders of CCAT

Late in the morning on Wednesday, June 19, a heavy tension fell over the streets of Nouméa, a city patrolled by 3,500 cops and military troops that has been under permanent curfew orders for the last six weeks (which now begins at 8 PM instead of 6 PM). As soon as news of the arrests of several leaders of CCAT began to spread, fears of reprisal quickly soared among the capital's loyalist population. Many of them rushed to gas stations to fill up before returning home in droves, causing massive traffic jams. Childcare facilities urgently called for parents to come and pick up their children. Most businesses shuttered their gates. The postal service (OPT) and the three main banks (BCI, BNC, and Société Générale) closed all of their offices until further notice throughout the archipelago. And the main administrative offices in Nouméa, such as the town hall, also closed their doors for the rest of the day.

In just a few hours, the streets of Nouméa quickly became almost as "completely deserted as the first days of the violent riots against the electoral reform law mid-May," in the words of an evening paper. While everyone was holding their breath to see what would happen, lively discussions once again animated the road blocks still held by Kanak insurgents (which by then were more about "filtering" than "blockading") regarding the well-known question, "What is to be done?" but also regarding outside attempts to contain their anger in the face of such an extensive police raid.

Though the *indépendantiste* party, *Union Calédonienne*, for example, immediately denounced this wave of repression (unlike other parties), it also called in a press release late that morning "for all CCAT intermediaries and for our youth to remain

calm and not to respond to the provocation—both on the ground as well as on social media." As for the *Cellule de coordination des actions de terrain / Nationale*, it released a press release that evening to local groups saying more or less the same thing, while CCAT itself made the rounds of road blocks to try to convince the youth to instead organize solidarity bingo nights to raise funds for the prisoners: "Concerning the arrests, every activist in CCAT has prepared for such an eventuality. Preparing for arrest is part of the commitments each one of us has made. CCAT calls for all *indépendantiste* activists not to respond to this new provocation, to demonstrate our determination, and not to fall for this maneuver from the colonial past."

During the night of June 19, however, many insurgents in Nouméa once again disrespected the orders from *indépendantiste* leaders, throwing themselves into battle, reinforcing or re-erecting road blocks, and clashing with the outnumbering cops. The insurgents fought so intensely that the representative of the French state in his brief press statement the following morning deplored the fact that "public disorder in Nouméa, especially in Magenta and in the greater Nouméa, has required numerous responses from the police forces."

The renewed intensity of the hostilities even led the commander of the gendarmerie in New Caledonia, general Nicolas Matthéos, to break his silence, giving an interview to the local television, since the next night, June 20, was also marked with renewed clashes: "We have once again been confronted with youth setting up road blocks and violently attacking gendarmes and police forces. Many of our vehicles were damaged last night... The prior night, three gendarmes were wounded. There have been, once again, new attempts to re-erect road blocks and the attempts of police to destroy them. We must emphasize the destructive will of those we're confronted with and their desire to attack the police forces and mobile gendarmes engaged on the ground. I'm genuinely asking all responsible tribal and family leaders to take responsibility so that this situation can cease...."

More precisely, on the night of June 20, clashes with the cops took place in the Nouméa neighborhoods of Vallée-du-Tir, Magenta, and Tuband, while in Normandie, the middle school there was looted and the lodging of one of the school administrators was burned down. Outside the capital, in Dumbéa-sur-mer, 30 rioters attacked the municipal police station. In Mont-Dore, gendarmes were shot at. And on the island of Lifou, insurgents broke in around 4 in the morning to the tarmac of the Wanaham airfield after having cut through a fence, burning large tires on the runway which they damaged, forcing Air Calédonie to cancel all flights destined to Lifou for the weekend.

Elsewhere, in the North the local CCAT erected a road block on June 19, blockading all access to the Poya-Népoui road, and in the South, in Yaté, local CCAT activists blockaded access to Enercal's hydro-electric power plant as well as the village's town hall, demanding freedom for the 11 arrested.

Lastly, to illustrate the alarmist remarks of the commander of the gendarme forces in Kanaky, we can also refer to his statements, compiled by a journalist, made in confidence during a meeting of the Ministry of the Interior's cabinet regarding the enormous difficulties his military forces faced from sometimes armed Kanak insurgents: "In the space of 10 days, the driver of one of the gendarmerie's armored vehicles and a GIGN officer almost lost their lives after they were shot at with high caliber bullets. The bullet-proof window of the armored vehicle saved the former, while the second received a bullet to his duffel bag while he was boarding a Puma helicopter which was hit three times in total" (Le Monde, 6/21/24).

On the Police Raid

In reality, everything began the day before, on Tuesday, June 18, with the publication of a very official "Letter from the President of the French Republic to All Caledonians" in the newspaper. Behind Macron's meaningless rambling about the future "creation of a new social contract in New Caledonia," everyone understood that the most important paragraph was the following: "I expect today that all road blocks will fully and definitively be lifted and that any violence will be condemned without any pretense. The situation to which New Caledonia has been reduced by a few agitators is unacceptable, and anyone who encouraged them will be held responsible for their actions."

The next morning at dawn, investigators from the Section de recherche de la gendarmerie in Nouméa, supported by the *Sous-direction antiterroriste* (SDAT) and the *Group interministériel de recherches* (GIR) in Nouméa, many of them who had arrived from France by military plane at the start of the insurrection, took action against CCAT. Initially, seven people were arrested in different neighborhoods in Nouméa around 6 AM by the GIGN and RAID, while the CCAT local located in the main offices of *Union Calédonienne*'s (UC) newspaper in the Magenta neighborhood in Nouméa were also searched and raided.

As for the others wanted by the French state, one was seized around 4 PM while driving his car, and the three others one by one contacted the gendarmerie themselves, included Christian Tein ("Bichou"), whom the authorities have regularly deemed to be one of CCAT's main leaders.

The 11 arrested are now being held in police custody in the Meunier barracks for up to 96 hours, charged under a preliminary investigation opened by the prosecutor's office four days after the insurrection began with "criminal conspiracy to commit a crime or an offense, armed robbery as part of a criminal organization, destruction of property by arson as part of a criminal organization, complicity by instigation in the crimes of homicide and attempted homicide of a public official, and participation in a criminal organization formed to commit acts of violence against persons and property."

More Generally....

In terms of state repression, the figures updated on June 19 by the prosecutor's office for the once exceptional emergency hearings [*comparution immédiate*] that now occur daily are as follows: since May 13 there have been 1,102 people detained pre-trial [*gardes à vue*], 164 detainees referred [*déferements*] to the courts, 94 tried in emergency hearings, and 73 people sentenced to prison. Of the 1,000+ people in pre-trial detention, 104 are minors (around 10%), two thirds (655) were detained for property offenses (thefts, many charged with "receiving stolen goods, willful destruction, etc."), and one quarter (239) are linked to attacks on police officers, whether gendarmes at their posts, or mobile gendarmes, national police, or municipal police during police operations. In addition, 12 official judicial inquiries have been opened, notably regarding the nine people killed by gunfire (six Kanaks, two gendarmes, and one Caldoche), two regarding the sabotage of the Kouaoua "serpentine" (the nickel conveyor belt used by the SLN), and, as the Nouméa prosecutor, Yves Dupas, added on June 21, "We have a whole series of proceedings regarding the receipt of money stolen from ATM's," which were targeted in many different places.

Once again, these figures should be placed in the context of an archipelago with a population of 112,000 Kanaks (out of 270,000 inhabitants), and it's a simple matter of ratios to get an idea of what the equivalent in France would be of 1% of a population detained...

June 17. An Incendiary Return to School

In New Caledonia the school calendar planned for one summer break from June 1-16, but it began a few weeks earlier, due to the eruption of the insurrection on May 13 and the subsequent state of emergency the whole archipelago was place under (from May 13 to 28). Now that more than a month has passed, the authorities have decided that it's time to "progressively" re-open primary and middle schools beginning on Monday, June 17 (even though they know there are no longer any school busses or school lunches anywhere), the high-schools the following week, and the university on July 1. But only in part of Kanaky, since all public middle schools and high-schools in the northern province (majority Kanak) remain closed until further notice.

Let's start by taking a look at the destruction of schools in the southern province (Nouméa), since, while shops, businesses, and industries were already broadly affected by looting and arsons, there's no reason why the infrastructure that prepares the youth for wage slavery should be spared. In total, according to the Caledonian government's Vice-President of Education, around 20 schools were "badly damaged," especially in Nouméa: Gustave Lods and Les Orchidées in the neighborhood of Logicoop, Les Pervenches in Portes-de-Fer, etc. And around a dozen secondary schools were either "totally destroyed" like those in the greater Nouméa, the Petro Attiti high-school in Rivière-Salée, and the middle schools in Kaméré, Auteuil, and Boulari, or were "partially burned down," like those in Portes-de-Fer, Tuband, Rivière-Salée, Dumbéa-sur-Mer, and the Catholic school, Saint-Pierre Chanel, run by the DDEC (*Direction diocésaine de l'enseignement catholique*) in Mont-Dore.

Among the vocational training schools that were either completely destroyed or looted, there was the *Institut de formation des professions sanitaires et sociales* (the IFPSS nursing school) in Nouville with 200 students, the *Centre de Formation aux techniques de la Mine et des Carrières* (CFTMC) in Poro in the northern province, the *Centre de formation des apprentis* (CFA) in Nouville with 250 apprentices, but also the already mentioned Pétro-Attiti vocational high-school, located in the Rivère-Salée neighborhood with 780 students.

This latter school has been especially in the news with the start of the school year, since it won't be able to re-open before 2025. It's even earned a glowing review in the local news from its principal, Jean-Luc Barnier. This great genius of progress has nothing better to call the young Kanak rioters than individuals deprived of "the slightest ounce of humanity," in other words, barbarians to be civilized, because they have dared to ravage his factory that produces flesh for the bosses: "Every corner of the vocational high-school, Pétro-Attiti, has been methodically, looted, wrecked, destroyed, and even set on fire... All the computer screens, the printers, even the mannequins used for first aid instruction were dismembered. I can't understand. There's not an ounce of humanity left in those who caused this havoc" (LNC, June 17).

If we now turn our attention to the two large middle schools in the largely Kanak working-class neighborhoods in Nouméa, a glimpse into the devastation of the riots gives the following damage assessment:

- At the Rivière-Salée middle school (384 students), the damage was extensive, with three out of four buildings entirely unusable. "There was looting, fires, and the water used to put out the fires destroyed our electrical system. The computer rooms and administrative offices no longer exist," said Éric Vallon, school principal.
- At the Kaméré middle school (370 students), the damage was also significant: two buildings, five classrooms, the student lounge, the media library, even the teacher's lounge and the nurse's office were destroyed or looted.

Despite all the damage caused at various schools, the city of Nouméa was rather optimistic for the re-opening of the schools on June 17, hoping to re-open 22 out of the 46 total schools that existed before the month of May. This figure, however, was quickly reduced, since new fires broke out overnight on June 15 in the Tuband neighborhood which forced the cancellation of the Ernest-Risbec school, and the overnight fire at the François Griscelli elementary school building where all of the teaching material was stored on June 16 also settled the question of a possible return to school in the Vallée du Tir neighborhood.

But this isn't all, since the authorities who had so painfully managed to reassign the 300 students at the Pétro-Attiti vocational high-school in Nouméa to other still intact schools lost even more resources: around 7 PM on June 16, the building housing teaching materials and student uniforms in the Jean XXIII vocational high-school was set on fire. What did the Caledonian government's Vice-President of Education conclude? "Attacking schools, whatever one's ideas, is completely unacceptable. If we were to lose another school on this scale, it will be impossible for us to reassign students elsewhere."

Finally, on the Loyauté islands where things may have seemed calmer until now, on the eve of the new school year, a fire broke out overnight on June 16 in the administrative offices of La Roche middle school on Maré island. The start of the new school year has now been postponed a week "in the best-case scenario."

Meanwhile...

- thousands of settlers are fleeing Kanaky, since international flights are slowly re-opening;
- the French Post Office is assessing its damage, between the burned post offices (in the Logicoop, Magenta, and Rivière-Salée neighborhoods) and looted offices (in N'géa, north Dumbéa, Koutio, and Plum), while wondering where it's going to store the 8 tons of mail and packages destined for the archipelago that have been piling up in Paris for more than a month;
- Prony Resources, which operates the nickel processing plant in the south of the archipelago, officially announced on June 18 that it is going to lay-off all of its thousands of workers: the insurrection that erupted on May 13 has in effect "forced the complete cessation of operations at our industrial mining complex because of security risks and damage to our infrastructure" (in other words, the sabotage we've already written about here);
- Walles Kotra, one of the first Kanak journalists to have held an important function on television (becoming the director of the local TV new channel in New Caledonia from 2019 until his retirement in 2022) displayed how far removed his backwards perspective is [décalage passéiste] from the insurgents: "In Kanak communities, many adults don't understand why the youth are burning everything down, even the schools and religious buildings. Such total destruction doesn't resemble our culture... No one has paid any attention to the fact that Nouméa has become the biggest Kanak city in New Caledonia, where several generations live without finding their place, torn apart, almost unrooted, cut off from tribal chiefs, the traditional leaders, or tribal mothers" (Le Monde, 6/19/24);
- Sonia Backès, former Macronist Secretary of State of Citizenship (2022-2023), President of the Southern Province Assembly and staunch loyalist, called for the murder of rebels while crying over the bankruptcy of her beloved "Caillou": "France cannot let itself be defeated by these petty insurgents. It seems like the state has purposefully stopped itself from responding in a proportionate manner. When a Puma helicopter is shot at with heavy weapons, is it normal to leave the way you came? ... In fact, the extremist indépendantistes are targeting the non- Kanak population like the Nazis targeted the Jews... New Caledonia is completely bankrupt in terms of local government, the electrical system, and social welfare. Enercal (the electricity distributor) can no longer pay for its fuel shipments from June onwards. Ruam (French social security) already can't pay for unemployment benefits.1 We have one month left. After that, we'll no longer be able to pay government officials' wages. If the French state doesn't come to our rescue, there will no longer be a

1 Note: this isn't entirely true, because, since New Caledonia has now defaulted on its debt payments, the French state will pay a subsidy of 51 million euros to the Caledonian unemployment agency (CAFAT), so that it can retroactively pay specific unemployment claims (partial or total) over the period of May and June, involving unemployment engendered by the current situation, i.e. "between 7,000 and 10,000 employees" and a little more than 1,000 business affected, including nearly half of which were "between 50 and 100% destroyed." What's more, the State is committed to reimbursing half the salaries paid by the southern province (Sonia Backès' province) to its 5,700 government employees, i.e. 377 million euros in May. All these figures give an idea of how much money the French state is beginning to pour into the region to try to keep the colony—bankrupted by Kanak insurgents in six weeks alone—afloat.

French New Caledonia." (interview in Le Point, 6/20/24);

- Sonia Lagarde, former Macronist Deputy of New Caledonia (2012-2017), Mayor of Nouméa since 2014 and staunch loyalist, accounts for the damage to her beloved city: "All the violence that has been committed in our city today amounts to 8 billion Pacific francs [480 million euros]. This includes the schools that were burned down, two libraries, the Rivière-Salée public service center, the 57 security cameras disabled, several dozen vehicles, part of our public maintenance workshop, the roads that were badly damaged... The list goes on." (N-C la 1ère, 6/21);
- It seems that the next legislative elections will take place in Kanaky in ten days time. We won't go into the whole political mess here, except to note a little of the atmosphere in the words of one of the two Macronist Deputies on the archipelago: "We have so many difficulties that the Haut-commissariat of the Republic in New Caledonia, the equivalent of the préfecture, tells us that it won't be taking charge of distributing candidate's platforms or polling locations. There won't be any electoral advertising billboards either because the Nouméa municipality is scared that the billboards will be dragged into the streets to make barricades" (France24, 6/19/24).

Now more than ever we need to show our solidarity—in action—with the young Kanak insurgents who are refusing to surrender, either to the pressure of political organizations calling for calm or to the French state's threat of vanquishing the revolt with the army. The insurgent youth are still fighting, continuing to demolish the colonial economy and institutional infrastructure in which they don't recognize themselves brick by brick, whatever the proponents of an oppressive relationship [*les partisans d'un rapport au monde univoque*] to the world—whether capitalist, colonialist, or ecocidal—may say.

17,000 Kilometers... And The Insurrection Spreads Across the Archipelago

06/25/2024

22,000 kilometers separate Nouméa from Marseille by sea (via the Panama Canal and Gibraltar), while it's 17,000 miles from Kanaky to Paris by air. This is the distance covered by seven indépendantistes in chains during a 30 hour flight before being brought to several French detention centers after having been rounded up in the raids on June 19 by the elite forces of the French state. While the South-Pacific archipelago has been gripped by a Kanak insurrection since May 13, which has largely escaped the notice of those in power, these seven men and women (and four others) are accused of being at the origin of the insurrection through the Cellule de coordination des actions de terrain (CCAT).

As the news began to spread about the nocturnal "deportation" by military plane of members of CCAT to a "mother country" they despise and reject, needless to say the embers of the Kanak insurrection were rekindled even more spectacularly. That Sunday and the following days saw roadblocks (re)-erected all throughout the archipelago, not to mention numerous attacks against the police forces or arsons that struck even more institutional buildings, businesses, and settler villas, including, but by no means exclusively, outside Greater Nouméa (i.e., in the "bush"). What's more, faced with this wave of repression that struck with full force, CCAT, which has often been outgunned by the insurgents these last few weeks, launched two new slogans in a June 23 press release: "The [nickel] mines will remain shut down!" and "We promise major disruptions!" during this past week of legislative elections.

New Road Blocks and Arsons

In the last three days of intensified hostilities, we can provide the following non-exhaustive list of incidents:

- in Dumbéa (Greater Nouméa, 35,000 inhabitants), the municipal police station and two police vehicles parked in front of it were set on fire, as was the new offices of the Fonds social de l'habitat (FSH). What's more, one police pickup truck that had come to confront the rioters crashed and was rapidly encircled by the insurgents then burned down. On Sunday around 3 AM, the Jack Mainguet school was also set on fire: the flames ravaged a part of the cafeteria, as well as the teacher's lounge and the principal's office. In all, no less than four armored

vehicles from the gendarmerie were deployed to Dumbea, including a Centaure.

- in Mont-Dore (Greater Nouméa, 27,000 inhabitants), where most of the businesses and shops were already looted and destroyed in the last six weeks of the insurrection and where settlers could only leave for the capital with the help of a ferry because of the road blocks, gendarmes again came under fire while trying to clear the blockades.
- in Païta (Greater Nouméa, 25,000 inhabitants) the destruction was also significant: the main building of the *Détachement spécial d'intervention de la gendarmerie nationale* was reduced to ashes. Same for the Ohlen and Gustin schools. As for the Louise-Michel middle school, which for once has lived up to its name, a teacher's lounge and one classroom went up in flames. Each time, firefighters weren't able to quickly intervene because the roads were blocked by the insurgents. A boat was also set on fire in Port-Laguerre.
- in Koumac (4,000 inhabitants, the name of which means in the Pwaxumak language, "strong-headed / obstinate"), located in the far north of Grande Terre, the town hall was partially burned down.
- in Fonwhary (a municipality in La Foa on the West coast, 3,500 inhabitants), a historic 120 year old colonial mansion was reduced to ashes.
- in Bourail (on the West coast, 5,000 inhabitants), two big loading docks in the Nandaï industrial sector (belonging to Matériaux Center and Discount) were set on fire, and two settler's villas were subjected to the same, culminating in an exchange of fire between the settlers and the "*barragistes*." According to the gendarmes, there are up to 300 Kanak insurgents at the road block that is blockading this bush town, a situation "we've never seen before." The municipality is now being supplied by sea, with the help of the New Caledonian government's scientific vessel, *L'Amborella*.
- in Lifou (on the Loyauté islands) insurgents broke onto the tarmac of the Wanaham airfield, after having cut through a fence. Then they set large tires on fire on the runway, damaging it and forcing Air Calédonie to cancel all flights destined to the island. And since the ship that serves as a maritime ferry is under repair until July 4, Lifou is thus now cut off from the rest of New Caledonia. What's more, on the Wé coast, the only clothing store on the small island was set on fire on Monday around midnight.
- in Maré (on the Loyauté islands), the gendarmerie brigade in Tadine was under attack all night long until 4 AM (Sunday to Monday), with insurgents attempting to break into the police station and hurling many volleys of molotov cocktails. As for the Collège de la Roche, it has still not reopened, after having been partially burned down a few days ago.

As for the authorities, the curfew (8 PM - 6 AM) that has been in force since May 15 has now been extended until at least July 1; the city bus network (Tanéo) and school transportation within the Nouméa urban area has still been shut down six weeks later; aerial shuttles between the Nouméa airfield and the international airport located 60 km away have resumed, although the road to get there has once again been blockaded with road blocks; the sale of alcohol which had on June 10 been reauthorized on a restricted basis in wine shops to satisfy the settler population (only wine and champagne is permitted with alcohol content less than 18 percent and in 1.5 liter bottles) while preventing young Kanaks from making molotovs with beer bottles, has been totally prohibited since June 25; numerous schools have been closed after a timid attempt at re-opening them on June 17; the *Fédération des industries de Nouvelle-Calédonie* and several loyalist parties wrote on June 25 to President Macron to ask him to place New Caledonia under direct French control, given the archipelago's bankruptcy and the Kanak insurrection; the prosecutor's office has opened an investigation into the death on Monday 24 of a young 23 year old Kanak who was killed at a road block in the Kaméré neighborhood in Nouméa, while rumors are circulating that his death was caused by Caldoche militias or police forces...

On the CCAT Trials

After their arrest on the morning of June 19, 11 members of CCAT spent 72 hours in police custody then were all brought before two investigating judges [*juges d'instruction*] of Nouméa's court of law [*Palais de Justice*] on Saturday, June 22, who notably charged them with "criminal conspiracy to prepare a crime" and "participation in a criminal organization formed to prepare violence against persons or the destruction of property" (for acts allegedly committed between November 1, 2023 and June 19, 2024) as well as for "complicity in attempted murder" (in Mont-Dore, Nouméa, Dumbéa, and Hienghène), "theft committed by an organized criminal gang" (in Nouméa, Dumbéa, Mont-Dore, and Païta), "destruction of property committed by an organized criminal gang by means dangerous to persons" (for acts allegedly committed between June 12 and 19 during the insurrection. According to Yves Dupas, the Republic Prosecutor [*Procureur de la République*] in Nouméa, these charges carry life in prison for having "defined, prepared, planned, and enacted a plan for violent action with the goal of destabilizing the country." The investigating judges and the prosecutor's office then presented their request for pre-trial detention, which of course was indeed ordered by a JLD [*Juge des libertés et de la détention*]: out of the 11 arrested, two were detained under judiciary control (including Darewa Dianou, son of Alphonse Dianou who was assassinated by the French military in the Ouvéa cave in 1988), seven were immediately loaded in a specially chartered military plane during the night to be incarcerated in pre-trial detention 17,000 kilometers away, and the last two (Gilles Jorédié and Joël Tjibaou, son of the historic president of the FLNKS)

requested a deferred hearing date to prepare their defense before the JLD. As of today, Wednesday, June 25, they were sent back before the "special" investigating judges [*juges des libertés*] and were incarcerated just like the seven others but this time in the Camp-Est prison in Nouméa...

While we wait to learn more, here are the names of the seven members of CCAT and the prisons in France where they're incarcerated in front of which rallies were held on Monday, June 24 at 6 PM at the call of the MKF (*Mouvement des Kanak en France*): Christian Tein is at Mulhouse-Lutterback (Haut-Rhin), Brenda Wanabo Ipeze is at Dijon (Côte-d'Or), Guillaume Vama is at Bourges (Cher), Steeve Unë is at Blois (Loir-et-Cher), Yewa Waetheane is at Nevers (Nièvre), Dimitri Qenegei is at Villefranche-sur-Saône (Rhône); Frédérique Muliava is at Riom (Puy-de-Dôme). Let us also add that their arrival has already provoked fears from the prison guards—which open up a few avenues of possible action for us—if we are to believe the prison guard union at the Riom prison: "It poses a problem for us in terms of the security plan since our establishment is rather light on security. If there was to be a large demonstration on the inside or the outside, if there were to be calls to break into the prison, or even a break-in during a transfer, for example, this could put us in a difficult situation. Prisoners with media attention are always a problem in this prison... But its our management of the outside that will be the biggest threat" (France 3, 6/24/24).

The "Shock" of a Historical Measure

The choice of the French state to transfer the Kanaks who resisted its domination to the other side of the planet recalls not only that New Caledonia was a settler-colony (with 21,600 convicts from France having been "*transportés*" to the archipelago and 3,700 who were "*relégués*" in the late 19th century), but also that New Caledonia has for a long time been a land of political "deportation"—both from France and to France.

4,200 communards from the Paris Commune were sent to the penal colony in New Caledonia after 1871, quickly followed by different rebels against the French colonial government: more than 100 Algerian Kaybles from 1874 onwards after the Mokhrani Revolt, 750 prisoners (political prisoners and pirates) rounded up in the Poulo Condor penal colony in Cochinchina (Vietnam) in 1891, and 15 more in 1914 accused of having committed attacks against the French military commanders in Hanoï, Comorian rebels in 1891, or even Polynesians opposed to French annexation in 1897. And in the other direction, more than 200 Kanaks guilty of refusing French colonial order have regularly been deported far away from their land between 1855 and 1929, notably to Tahiti, to the penal colony in Vietnam, to the Nouvelle-Hébrides (Vanuatu), and as far away as Obock on the Somali coast (Djibouti).

Let us also recall that after the adoption by referendum of the Matignon Accords (1988) signed between the *indépendantistes*, loyalists, and the French state, which put an end to the Kanak uprising in the 1980's (the so-called "*Evénements*"), one of its articles included an amnesty measure. On 18, November 1988, there were nearly a hundred prisoners who were released from prison, including 26 Kanak insurgents imprisoned in the Paris region (in pre-trial detention for having taken up arms against the gendarmes and military on the Ouvéa island). It's in this sense that we can understand the shock felt throughout Kanaky after the deportations of CCAT members to prisons in France, reflected in a press release from the *Union Calédonienne* published on June 23: "The deportation of leaders and militants is a tool that France has implemented ever since it took possession of Kanaky in 1853. This is proof that even in 2024 France is resorting to repressive practices from the colonial era," in this case the carceral measures of forced exile which have a long history and haven't been used for over 35 years.

As for the CCAT directly, which today, June 25, held a solemn press conference in La Conception (Mont-Dore), it's perhaps the words of Jhon-Rock Tindao, president of the Drubea- Kapumë tribal council, that express it the best: "This great inferno is a cry of revolt of more than 10,000 youth who see their dreams of independence collapsing with the electoral reform... The condition *sine qua non* for bringing about a climate of peace, for there to be discussions, and for all CCAT intermediaries to stand down for the time being, is the return of Christian Tein and all his comrades imprisoned in France because we consider these arrests to be groundless."

All things considered, it seems that for a good while yet, the precious nickel so coveted by the French state to fuel the batteries of its green capitalism, a mineral which abounds in Kanaky, will not be arriving to its destination, which is at least another good reason to show our unwavering solidarity with the insurgents who are continuing day after day to ravage the colonial economic infrastructures on the archipelago...

Chronological note on the Kanak parties & the rise to power of CCAT until the insurrection on May 13, 2024:

The FLNKS (*Front de libération nationale kanak et socialiste*), founded in 1984, today assembles the four main political parties: the *Union calédonienne* (UC), the *Parti de libération kanak* (PALIKA), the *Rassemblement démocratique océanien* (RDO), and the *Union progressiste en Mélanésie* (UPM). These parties co-manage the local Caledonian government with the loyalists, as well as some economic interests (including mining) since the Nouméa Accords in 1988, and are often challenged by part of the Kanak population for their corruption or their postponement of the objective of independence, especially by the urban youth in Nouméa, or even for their progressive integration into the Western capitalist colonialist system (especially by the tribes).

In November 2023, the *Cellule de coordination des actions de terrain* (CCAT) was founded on an initiative of the UC launched in its congress on the island of Pins, which six *indépendantiste* organizations outside of the FLNKS joined: the labor unions USTKE (*Union syndicale des travailleurs kanak et exploités*, founded in 1981 and member of the FLNKS from 1984 to 1989) and the CNTP (*Confédération nationale des travailleurs du Pacifique*, which split from the USTKE in 2016), the *Parti Travailliste* (founded in 2007, close to USTKE), the MOI (*Mouvement des océaniens indépendantistes*, founded in 2019 and comprised of Wallisians and Futunians living in Kanaky), the *Dynamique Autochtone* and the *Dynamik Unitaire Sud* (DUS, which split from PALIKA in 2011).

For their part, the three other parties in the FLNKS had already created in 2020 a *Comité nationaliste et citoyen* (CNC) in order to broaden their base for the second local independence referendum, which led to the CCAT and CNC working together from November 2023 onwards while mobilizing all the Kanaks in the tribes and in Nouméa to stop the French government from reforming the local electoral body, which was frozen since the Nouméa Accords (1988). By deciding to open the electoral body to thousands of settlers who arrived in Kanaky since 1998, the French state thus considered itself to have exited period of the Nouméa Accords which had provided for three referendums on self-determination and which resulted, respectively, in 43% voting for independence in 2018, 47% in 2020, and who cares how many in 2021 since it was boycotted by Kanaks (who were in a period of mourning for Covid-19 deaths).

The first phase of the mass mobilization against the proposed electoral reform initially consisted of organizing peaceful demonstrations, which grew progressively from 3,000 people in late November to 15,000 on March 28, reaching around 60,000 people on April 13 in Nouméa (for a population of 270,000 of which 41% are Kanak). Given the growing success of these demonstrations, the 42nd Congress of the FLNKS finally decided in March 2024, i.e. two months before the start of the insurrection, to open itself up to all other *indépendantiste* organizations, and a working group was set up to modify the Front's charter.

Then the second phase of the mass mobilizations began, dubbed "*10 jours pour Kanaky,*" in the week prior to the vote on electoral reform in the National Assembly (the vote in the Senate had taken place on April 2), which was due to occur on May 13 and definitively adopt the bill into law. There were many more demonstrations during this period, some of the nickel mines started to be blockaded, and a USTKE strike paralyzed the ports, the docks, and the Nouméa airport. Lastly, the phase, called "2.5," began on Sunday, May 12 with the objective of erecting partial road blocks [*barrages filtrants*] throughout the whole archipelago, notably disrupting the economy of the capital, Nouméa—except that on Monday, May 13, much like what happened with the "*gilets jaunes*," where self-organized groups blocked traffic circles by day but broke off at night to set fire to targets that seemed adequate, everything quickly accelerated.

In Nouméa and its *banlieues*, where urban Kanak youth are both disgusted with the *indépendantiste* political parties and are subjected more than any others to misery, racism, and humiliation, the spark from the forced passage of the infamous electoral reform exploded into a social insurrection marked by all-out arson and looting. On May 16, the number of insurgents was estimated at around 10,000 by the authorities (5,000 in Greater Nouméa, i.e. Dumbea, Mont-Dore, and Païta, and 4,000 in the capital). CCAT, the FLNKS, the tribal authorities, the USTKE, and the Union Calédonienne all had no trouble denouncing the destruction and looting or calling for calm, while trying to enforce it at the road blocks—but all to no avail, causing 1.5 billion euros of damage while ruining the neo-colonial economy of New Caledonia that was already weakened by the drastic fall in the cost of nickel. As for the French state, no matter how many times it declared a state of emergency between May 15 and May 28, while signing 33 administrative detention orders [*ordres de perquisition administratives*] (OPA) and 29 house arrests, including 25 for CCAT members (i.e. "10 of the mafioso leaders of these extremist sects committing murder and looting," in the words of the Minister of the Interior) or deploying 3,500 cops and military troops across the archipelago, the insurrection is still underway after nearly seven weeks.

Finally, on June 15, 2024, one month after the start of the insurrection, the 43rd Congress of the FLNKS was held in Koné, which was supposed to integrate its six new member groups. Faced with the presence of nearly 300 members of the CCAT

who had held their first general assembly in Bourail and who were intending to make themselves heard as representatives of the "*barragistes*" and the rank-and-file, dissatisfied by their 10 allotted places, the FLNKS congress was finally postponed after a few hours.

Last but not least, during President Macron's emergency visit to Kanaky on May 23, 10 days after the start of the insurrection, he met with several of New Caledonia's *indépendantiste* components, i.e. not only the FLNKS parties, but also Christian Tien from the *Cellule de coordination des actions de terrain* (CCAT), despite his house arrest. One month later, with all the duplicity that comes with all power (*a fortiori* colonial power), the President decided to send Christian Tien to the depths of a faraway prison with six of his comrades...